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# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Volume XIX

JULY 1915

Number 3

## CHRISTIANITY AND WAR—A HISTORICAL SKETCH

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In view of Jesus' emphasis on brotherly love and his teaching of the principle of non-resistance, in the Sermon on the Mount, it would seem as if it might fairly have been expected that his followers would condemn war and pronounce it un-Christian. As a matter of fact few of them have done so.

Primitive Christian literature contains no explicit statement of the Christian attitude toward war,<sup>1</sup> but the account of the centurion Cornelius, in Acts, chaps. 10 and 11, seems to show that the author of Acts saw no incompatibility between Christianity and the profession of arms; and Paul's words in Rom. 13:1 indicate that at least the use of the sword by the constituted authorities for the punishment of evildoers was not disapproved by him. Whether the principle of submission to rulers enunciated by Paul in this passage and his advice to Christians to abide in the same calling wherein they were called (I Cor. 7:20) mean that he regarded war as consistent with Christianity and the career of a soldier legitimate for a Christian disciple we cannot tell. It must be remembered that military service was not compulsory in the Roman empire and that Paul was expecting the speedy end of the world;

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the attitude of the early Christians toward war see Harnack, *Militia Christi* (1905), and the essay by Pierre Batiffol in the volume entitled *L'Église et la guerre* (1913).

so that the problem of the relation of Christianity and war may not have been thrust upon his attention.

We get no further light upon our subject until nearly the middle of the second century, when Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, after quoting Isaiah's prophecy of the time when men shall beat their swords into plowshares, says:

That this has come to pass you may convince yourselves. For from Jerusalem there went out into the world twelve men, uneducated and without eloquence, but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God, and we who formerly murdered one another now not only do not make war upon our enemies, but that we may not lie or deceive our judges we gladly die confessing Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he says:

We who were filled with war and mutual slaughter and every wickedness have each of us in all the world changed our weapons of war—swords into plows and spears into agricultural implements—and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope which we have from the Father himself through the Crucified.<sup>2</sup>

Justin's words might be taken to mean that Christians would have nothing to do with war and consequently kept out of the army; but he seems rather to have had in mind the personal relations of Christians with their neighbors. Their attitude toward their fellows, and in persecution toward their judges, revealed the spirit of peace, going even to the length of non-resistance. The interpretation of martyrdom as an expression of the Christian principle of peaceable submission to injury was very common among the early Christians.

By Irenaeus<sup>3</sup> the same prophecy of Isaiah is referred to and it is then said:

But if the law of liberty, that is the word of God preached to the whole world by the apostles who went forth from Jerusalem, has caused so great a transformation that they have made their swords and war lances into plows and have changed them into sickles for reaping grain—that is, into instruments of peace—and are now ignorant how to fight, and when smitten turn also the other cheek, the prophets have said these things not of someone else but of Him who has accomplished them.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. 110.

<sup>3</sup> *Adversus Haereses*, iv, 34, 4.

Whether it is to be concluded from these passages that Justin and Irenaeus would have condemned war in all circumstances and would have regarded Christianity and the profession of arms as necessarily incompatible, at any rate it was recognized in their time that it was a common practice among Christians to frown upon war and to refrain from going into the army as well as from engaging in many other public employments, as is shown by the fact that the heathen Celsus (177-80 A.D.) had to exhort the Christians "to labor with the emperor to maintain justice, to fight for him, and under him, and to bear command in his armies."<sup>1</sup>

With this exhortation may be compared the Christian apologist Tatian's *Address to the Greeks* (chap. 11), where military command is classed with political authority, wealth, fame, and the like as things not desired by the author, the implication being, not that the military profession is bad in itself or worse than the other things mentioned, but that they are matters of indifference to the Christian whose mind is set on things above.

By the second-century heresiarch Marcion a sharp contrast was drawn between the God of the Jews—a God of justice and severity—and the God of the Christians—a God of pure love and mercy who punishes nobody. As a consequence of the difference between them Marcion rejected altogether the Jewish God and the Old Testament in which He was revealed. Whether he drew the natural conclusion that it was unlawful for Christians to engage in war we are not informed; but it is worth noticing that the retention of the Old Testament by the Christian church and the recognition of it as authoritative undoubtedly tended to keep alive the Old Testament conception of God as a God of War and to make more difficult the consistent repudiation of all war by the Christian church.

The earliest explicit discussion of the relation of Christianity and war is found in the writings of Tertullian. In his tract *On Idolatry* he says:

There is no agreement between the divine and the human oath, between the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot serve two masters, God and Caesar. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum*, viii, 73.

But how will a Christian make war? Nay, how will he serve as a soldier, even in peace, without a sword which the Lord has taken away? For although soldiers came to John and received a rule to govern their actions, and even though a centurion believed, the Lord afterward in disarming Peter disarmed every soldier.<sup>1</sup>

He argues the matter at still greater length in his *De corona militis*, adding the further consideration that the profession of the soldier involves a man in idolatrous practices which are wholly opposed to Christianity. Tertullian's opposition to military service on the part of Christians was thus due, not simply to the fighting and killing involved in it, but also and apparently chiefly to its worldliness. He condemned it, as he did many other employments, because it meant a divided allegiance.

Tertullian of course was an extremist, and his teaching in the matter is not necessarily representative of the Christian sentiment of his age. In fact it would seem from his failure to refer to earlier cases in support of his contention that he recognized his rigorism as something new. But he did not stand alone. A generation later Origen, in reply to Celsus' exhortation to the Christians, already referred to, declared that they would help the emperor in many ways, particularly by their piety and their prayers; but that they would not fight under him even though he required it of them.<sup>2</sup> In the same connection Origen intimated that there might be just wars, but even so Christians did not take part in them, but like the heathen priests, who were not expected to engage in war, they prayed for the army fighting righteously and for the emperor ruling righteously, "that all things opposed and hostile to those doing righteously might be destroyed."<sup>3</sup>

His contemporary Cyprian called war murder,<sup>4</sup> and Lactantius some sixty years later denounced it in the severest possible terms, basing his condemnation upon the sixth commandment.

When God forbids us to kill he not only prohibits murder, which is not permitted even by civil law, but he warns also against things esteemed legitimate among men. Thus it will not be lawful for a just man, whose armor is righteousness, to engage in war, nor to accuse anyone of a capital crime, for it makes no difference whether you slay by the sword or by a word, because

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also *Contra Celsum*, v, 33; iv, 82, and i, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Celsum*, viii, 73.

<sup>4</sup> *Ad Donatum*, chap. 6.

killing itself is forbidden. Therefore in this precept of God no exception whatever ought to be made, but it is always wrong to kill a man whom God willed to be a sacrosanct being.<sup>1</sup>

In an earlier chapter of the same work<sup>2</sup> Lactantius eloquently defended the principle of non-resistance, contrasting his own position with that of Cicero, who countenanced retaliation but not unprovoked injury.

With Lactantius' words may be compared the utterance of a contemporary, Arnobius, in his work *Against the Heathen*<sup>3</sup> in which he claimed that the coming of Christ, who taught that evil ought not to be requited with evil and that it is better to suffer than to inflict wrong, had tended to decrease war and promote peace.

On the other hand, in spite of the theory to which these Fathers gave expression and which perhaps was widely acted upon, there were Christians who took a different position. Tertullian had to argue the case against those who quoted Bible texts in defense of the profession of arms, and we know that there were many Christians in the Roman armies of the day. Tertullian himself bears witness to the fact, as for instance in his *Apology*, where he says: "We are but of yesterday, yet we fill every place among you,—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, marketplaces, and even the camp."<sup>4</sup> And again: "We sail with you and fight with you and till the ground with you."<sup>5</sup> And Clement of Alexandria, addressing Christian soldiers, says: "Has knowledge laid hold upon you while engaged in military service? Hearken to the commander who orders what is right."<sup>6</sup>

Clement's words suggest that while Christians may not often have adopted the military profession they did not always think it necessary to abandon it when converted, very likely appealing in that case to Paul's advice to his readers to abide in the same calling wherein they were called. The more rigorous Tertullian, on the other hand, in his *De corona militis*,<sup>7</sup> although he recognizes that the soldier who becomes a Christian is in different case from the

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Institutes*, vi, 20, 15 f.; cf. also i, 18; v, 17.

<sup>2</sup> vi, 18.

<sup>3</sup> i, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Chap. 42.

<sup>6</sup> *Cohortatio* 10 (Migne, "Patrologia Graeca," Vol. VIII, col. 216).

<sup>7</sup> Chap. 11.

Christian who becomes a soldier, yet advises the former to abandon the military career if converted to Christianity, because otherwise he will get into all sorts of difficulties and be obliged to resort to practices unbecoming a Christian.

The presence of Christians in the army in the middle of the third century is testified to by Dionysius of Alexandria,<sup>1</sup> and in the time of Diocletian there were large numbers of Christian soldiers, as is evident from the testimony both of Lactantius<sup>2</sup> and Eusebius<sup>3</sup> and still more from the action of the emperor Constantine in recognizing the God of the Christians at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 311. This act marked an epoch in the development of Christian thought upon the subject of war. It was believed by the Christians that Constantine was fighting as the champion of Christianity against heathenism, and his victory was ascribed to God, who was thenceforth widely recognized as a God of war like the Jewish Yahweh. Eusebius' account of the victory is very instructive:

Constantine, who was the superior both in dignity and imperial rank, first took compassion upon those who were oppressed at Rome, and having invoked in prayer the God of heaven and his Word and Jesus Christ himself, the Savior of all, as his aid, advanced with his whole army, proposing to restore to the Romans their ancestral liberty. But Maxentius, putting confidence rather in the arts of sorcery than in the devotion of his subjects, did not dare to go forth beyond the gates of the city, but fortified every place and district and town which was enslaved by him in the neighborhood of Rome and in all Italy with an immense multitude of troops and with innumerable bands of soldiers. But the Emperor, relying upon the assistance of God, attacked the first, second, and third army of the tyrant and conquered them all; and having advanced through the greater part of Italy was already very near Rome. Then, that he might not be compelled to wage war with the Romans for the sake of the tyrant, God himself drew the latter, as if bound in chains, some distance without the gates. . . . Thus, as in the time of Moses himself and of the ancient God-beloved race of Hebrews "he cast Pharaoh's chariots and hosts into the sea and overwhelmed their chosen fighters in the Red Sea and covered them with the flood," in the same way Maxentius also with his soldiers

<sup>1</sup> In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, vi, 41, 22; vii, 11, 20; cf. also *ibid.*, vii, 15, and Cyprian, *Ep.* 39.

<sup>2</sup> *De mortibus persecutorum*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, viii, 1 and 4; cf. also the three martyrologies printed by Harnack, *Militia Christi*, pp. 114 ff.

and bodyguards went down into the depths like a stone, when he fled before the power of God which was with Constantine.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in Licinius' campaign against the persecutor Maximin a couple of years later the conviction that the Christian God was warring against the gods of the heathen inspired the Christian soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Finally, when Constantine and Licinius broke with each other, and the latter, recognizing Constantine's greater popularity with the Christians, altered his policy and attempted by showing them disfavor to rally pagan sentiment in his own support, Constantine seemed once more to the Christians to be waging a holy war in defense of Christianity. In the words of Eusebius, "God was the friend, protector, and guardian of Constantine"; and when Licinius "determined to wage war with Constantine he also proceeded to join battle with the God of the universe, whom he knew that Constantine worshiped." The result was inevitable. God prospered Constantine and his son Crispus, "in the battle in all things according to their wish."<sup>3</sup>

From this time on the Christian church supported the imperial wars and strengthened the hands of the emperor just as Constantine had counted upon its doing. The old notion of the inconsistency of Christianity and war appeared now and again. There is a suggestion of it, for instance, in a letter of Basil the Great to Amphilochius, where it is said: "Murder committed in war our fathers did not count as murder, excusing those, I suppose, who fought in temperance and piety. But perhaps it is well to counsel that those whose hands are not clean should abstain from communion for three years."<sup>4</sup>

In general, however, the common opinion of the legitimacy of war, current in the Roman world of the day, seems to have been shared by the Christians too. Athanasius, for instance, after speaking of marriage in a letter to a monk, goes on to say: "For also in connection with other things which are done in life we shall find discrimination necessary, as for instance it is not permitted to kill, but in war to slay the enemy is both legitimate and worthy of

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, ix, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, x, 8, 6 f.; 9, 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Ep.* 128, § 13.

all praise.”<sup>1</sup> In the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions*, although it is required that many employments, such as that of the maker of idols, the actor, the gamester, and the professional musician, must be abandoned before a person can be admitted to the church, it is said of the soldier only that he must do no injustice, must accuse no one falsely, and must be content with his wages.<sup>2</sup> The great Bishop Ambrose also, in his work *On the Duties of the Clergy*, while recognizing that the study of war seemed foreign to the clergy, for they had to do rather with the soul than with the body,<sup>3</sup> yet added: “Our fathers, however, such as Joshua the son of Nun, Jerubbaal, Samson, and David, won the highest glory also in war.” And in another passage he declared that “courage which in war defends one’s country against the barbarians, or at home protects the weak or one’s friends from robbers, is full of justice.”<sup>4</sup> And again: “He who does not ward off injury from a friend, if he be able, is as much at fault as he who causes it.”<sup>5</sup>

Augustine,<sup>6</sup> in spite of his theory of the two states, which it might have been expected would lead him to condemn Christian participation in war as involving allegiance to the God of this world, justified it in the most explicit terms and set the fashion for official Christian opinion from that day to this. In his work against Faustus the Manichaean, who had criticized the Old Testament among other things because of the wars it represented the Israelites as carrying on at the express command of God, Augustine discussed the question of war at considerable length. The following passages make his position clear:

What is the evil in war? Is it that men who are to die anyway die that the victors may live in peace? To complain of this is the part of the timid, not the religious. Love of doing harm, cruelty in taking vengeance, an angry and implacable temper, violent insurrection, the desire to rule, and the like—these are rightly to be blamed in war, and they are usually and justly punished when against those who resist with force war is waged by the good at the command either of God or of some other legitimate authority.

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Amunem* (Migne, “Pat. Gr.” Vol. XXVI, col. 1173).

<sup>2</sup> *Ap. Const.*, viii, 31 (ed. Lagarde, p. 268).

<sup>3</sup> i, 35.                  <sup>4</sup> i, 27.                  <sup>5</sup> i, 36.

<sup>6</sup> For Augustine’s attitude see the essay by P. Monceaux in the volume already referred to, *L’Église et la guerre*.

After quoting Luke 3:14; Matt. 22:21 and 8:9 f. in support of the lawfulness of war, he continues:

It depends on the reasons for which men undertake war and the authority by which they do it. The natural order fitted to promote the peace of men demands that the prince should have authority to wage war and the right to decide in the matter, and that the soldiers should serve the common peace and safety by obeying the command to fight. Moreover, it is not to be doubted that a war undertaken by the command of God for terrifying or crushing or subduing the pride of men is right, since not even a war caused by human cupidity is able to harm the incorruptible God, or his saints, to whom it serves rather for the exercise of patience, for the humbling of the soul, and for the bearing of paternal discipline. . . . But if it be thought impossible that God can have commanded war, because afterward Jesus Christ said "I say unto you, resist not evil; but if anyone smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also," it should be understood that this refers not to the body but to the heart.<sup>1</sup>

A few years later a friend having brought to his attention a criticism passed upon Christianity because of its doctrine of non-resistance, Augustine replied:

These precepts of patience should always be retained in readiness of heart, and the benevolence which does not return evil for evil should always be fulfilled in the will. But many things must be done in correcting with a certain benignant severity, even against their will, those whose profit we ought to consult rather than their wishes. Their writings have most excellently praised this in the ruler of a state, for in correcting a son, however sternly, the paternal love surely is by no means lost. Yet that is done which is received unwillingly and in pain by him whom it seems necessary to heal even against his will by pain. And on this principle if this earthly commonwealth keep the Christian precepts even its wars will not be carried on without benevolence, that a peaceful union of piety and justice may be the more easily resolved upon by the vanquished. . . . When God destroys the support of the wicked and makes impotent the lusts of the wealthy he does it in mercy, for in mercy, if it were possible, even wars might be waged by the good, that licentious desires might be tamed and those vices abolished which under a just government ought to be either extirpated or suppressed. For if Christian discipline condemned all wars, the soldiers who sought counsel concerning salvation would have been told in the gospel that they should throw away their arms and retire altogether from military service. But it was said to them, "Do violence to no man, accuse no one falsely, and be content with your wages." Those certainly who are commanded to be content with their wages are not forbidden to

<sup>1</sup> Book xxii, §§ 74-76 (Vienna ed., Vol. XXV, pp. 572 f.); see also *De civ. Dei*, iv, 15; xix, 12 f.

be soldiers. Accordingly let those who say that the teaching of Christ is opposed to the good of the commonwealth provide an army of such soldiers as the teaching of Christ requires. Let them provide such subjects, husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, kings, judges, finally such taxpayers and collectors, as the Christian doctrine demands, and let them dare to say that it is opposed to the good of the commonwealth, or rather let them hesitate to confess that if they were to obey it it would be a great safety to the commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

Again in a letter to Count Boniface,<sup>2</sup> the Christian governor of North Africa, whose conscience was troubling him because he was obliged to engage in war against the Vandals, Augustine encouraged him with the assurance that Christianity was not opposed to military service<sup>3</sup> and with a reference to the example of David, of Cornelius, and of the centurion whose faith was commended by Christ. He insisted at the same time that war should be waged only as a necessity and for the sake of peace, that mercy should be shown to the conquered and to captives, and that faith should be kept with enemies as well as with friends. This did not prevent him from defending the use of strategems in war, for in his *Questions on the Heptateuch*, in referring to God's command that Joshua should set an ambush, he said: "When one undertakes a just war, whether one conquers by an open fight or by snares does not affect justice."<sup>4</sup> In the same connection he defined a just war as one undertaken to avenge injury, as when a state neglects to make amends for a wrong done by its citizens or to restore property unjustly taken, and also any war entered upon at the command of God, who in this case is the real leader of the army, while the people are to be regarded, not as the authors of the war, but as the agents of God. It is important to notice in this connection that Augustine did not confine just wars to defensive wars only, but recognized the legitimacy also of offensive wars, if they were undertaken for purposes of vengeance. He thus made it possible, by setting the fashion for the theologians who came after him, for Christian princes to invoke the authority of religion in justification of many wars of very doubtful character.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 138 (*ad Marcellinum*) §§ 14, 15 (Vienna edition, Vol. XLIV, pp. 139 f.).

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 180.

<sup>3</sup> § 4; cf. *De civ. Dei*, i, 21.

<sup>4</sup> vi, 10 (Vienna ed., Vol. XXVIII, p. 428).

In the *Decretum Gratiani* of the twelfth century the following passage is quoted and ascribed to a lost work of Augustine's entitled *De diversis ecclesiae observationibus*: "Among the true worshipers of God even wars themselves are peaceful which are carried on not from cupidity but with the desire for peace, that the wicked may be restrained and the good supported."<sup>1</sup>

Two centuries after Augustine, Isidore of Seville distinguished just and unjust wars in the following words:

A just war is one undertaken with the purpose of securing redress or for the sake of repelling an enemy. An unjust war is one begun from passion without a legitimate reason, concerning which Cicero says in the *Republic*: "Those are unjust wars which are undertaken without cause." For there can be no just war except for the purpose of punishing or repelling an enemy.<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of Augustine and Isidore was taken by the leading theologians and ecclesiastics of the Middle Ages, Augustine's authority controlling in this matter as in many others. In his *Speculum Animae*<sup>3</sup> Bonaventura says:

But in regard to war we must notice that three things are particularly required for a just war, namely, the authority of the prince; as Augustine said in his work *Against Faustus*: "Authority for beginning war and the decision concerning it belong to the prince"; likewise a just cause; as Augustine said: "Wars are just which avenge injuries"; thirdly, a right intention; as Augustine said in his work *De verbis Domini*: "By worshipers of God wars are not waged with cruelty or cupidity."<sup>4</sup>

The discussion of the matter in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* has remained standard ever since in the Roman Catholic church. In Part II, ii, Question 40, Article I, Thomas says:

There are three requisites for a war to be just. The first is the authority of the prince by whose command the war is to be waged. For it does not belong to a private person to start a war, because he can prosecute his claim in the

<sup>1</sup> *Decretum Gratiani*, pars II, causa 23, quest. 1, c. 6; in Friedberg's edition of the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, Vol. I, p. 855. At the end of question 1, after giving a number of quotations upon the subject from Augustine and others, Gratian concludes: "From all these it may be gathered that war is not sinful and that the precepts of patience are to be kept not externally but in the heart."

<sup>2</sup> *Etymologiae*, xviii, 1 (Migne, "Pat. Gr.", Vol. LXXXII, 639).

<sup>3</sup> Chap. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See also Abelard's *Sic et Non*, chap. 156, where an interesting quotation upon the subject is given from Pope Nicholas.

court of a superior. In like manner the mustering of the people that has to be done in war does not belong to a private person. But since the care of the commonwealth is intrusted to princes, to them belongs the protection of the common weal of the city, kingdom, or province subject to them. And as they lawfully defend it with the material sword against inward disturbances by punishing malefactors, so it belongs to them also to protect the commonwealth from enemies without by the sword of war. The second requisite is a just cause, so that they who are assailed should deserve to be assailed for some fault that they have committed. The third thing requisite is a right intention of promoting good or avoiding evil.

To the objection from the text that all that take the sword shall perish with the sword, it is to be said, as Augustine says, that he takes the sword who without either command or grant of any superior or lawful authority arms himself to shed the blood of another. But he who uses the sword by the authority of a prince or judge (if he is a private person), or out of zeal for justice, as it were by the authority of God (if he is a public person), does not take the sword of himself, but uses it as committed to him by another.

To the objection from the text, "I say to you not to resist evil," it is to be said, as Augustine says, that such precepts are always to be observed "in readiness of heart, so that a man be ever ready not to resist, if there be occasion for non-resistance." But sometimes he must take another course, in view of the common good, or even in view of those with whom he fights.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in Art. III Thomas says:

Is it lawful in war to use stratagems? The end of stratagems is to deceive the enemy. Now there are two ways of deceiving in word or deed. One way is by telling lies and breaking promises. This is always illegitimate, and no one ought to deceive the enemy in this way; for "there are certain laws of war, and agreements to be observed even among enemies," as Ambrose says. In another way one may be deceived by the fact that we do not open our purpose or declare our mind to him. That we are not always bound to do. Even in sacred doctrine many things are to be concealed, especially from unbelievers, that they may not scoff at them, according to the text, "Give not what is holy to dogs." Much more are our preparations to attack our enemies to be hidden from them. Such concealment belongs to the nature of stratagems, which it is lawful to use in just wars.

Again, in discussing the question, Can there be a religious order destined for military service? Thomas says:

To the text "I say to you not to resist evil," it is to be said that there are two ways of not resisting evil: one way by forgiving the wrong done to oneself,

<sup>1</sup> I have used Rickaby's abridged translation in his *Aquinas Ethicus*, Vol. I, pp. 407 ff., making a few minor corrections and omitting some passages quoted by Thomas from Augustine.

and that may be a point of perfection, when it is expedient so to behave for the salvation of others; the other way is by patiently enduring the injuries done to others, and that is an imperfect and even a vicious course, if one can well resist the wrongdoer. . . . Our Lord says in the same place: "Of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again"; and yet if one were not to ask back the goods belonging to others when they were his concern to keep, that would be sinful: for a man may laudably give away his own, but not another's. Much less are the interests of God to be neglected.<sup>1</sup>

The article on war in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* presents the matter in very careful shape. According to that article, a nation has the right to go to war, first, if menaced by foreign aggression; secondly, if its rights are actually violated by a foreign power, and it cannot secure redress without war; and, thirdly, if future security demands the punishment of the threatening or infringing nation. It may also be justified in going to war at the request of another state which is in peril, or to stop the oppression of the innocent. On the other hand, the mere advantage of the nation itself, for instance the promotion of its trade or the enlargement of its territory, the need of exercising its standing army or reconciling the people to the tax for its maintenance, or the desire to escape internal revolution, is not an adequate justification of war.

The article insists still further that war is the last resort and should not be entered upon until other means of attaining the desired end have failed. It also takes the position that any damage may be inflicted which promotes the accomplishment of the purpose of the war, but not wanton and useless damage; while actions intrinsically immoral, such as lying, assassination, the killing of non-combatants, and the like, are unconditionally forbidden.

The article is based throughout upon what the author calls natural law, the position being taken that natural law has been reinforced, not abrogated, by Christianity, and still governs all the dealings of men with men and nations with nations. In this the article is true to Catholic tradition. Ever since Irenaeus first clearly formulated the principle in the second century, it has been held by the Catholic church that Christ did away with the ceremonial law of the Jews, but not with the moral law, which was written upon the hearts of men from the beginning and was restated

<sup>1</sup> Question 188, Art. III; Rickaby, Vol. II, p. 431.; see also Questions 41, 42, 64.

in the Decalogue. Instead of abrogating this law, Christianity emphasized and sharpened it, and the Christian law is nothing but this permanent natural law, whose essence is love for God and man. As this law is the same both in Old Testament and New, its precepts, as, for instance, the precept "Thou shalt not kill," are to be interpreted in the light of the pre-Christian as well as the Christian revelation. And hence as war was approved by God under the old dispensation, when the natural law, which is identical with the Christian law, was already in force, the commands, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," are not to be understood under Christianity any more than under Judaism as forbidding war. In other words, all that Catholic ethics undertakes to do for nations and for the rank and file of men is to reaffirm the principles of natural morality.

On the other hand, in its evangelical counsels intended for the spiritual élite of the church, its monks and clerics, the common standard is raised, and among the other employments from which such persons are supposed to abstain is military service. This was decreed in the seventh canon of the Council of Chalcedon, of 451, and a similar prohibition was adopted by many other councils, both early and late, though it was often disregarded, especially in the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup>

The principle governing the prohibition was not that war is inherently bad, but that, like many other employments permitted to the laity, it is worldly in character and as such not meet for those set apart for spiritual affairs. In the words of Thomas Aquinas: "It is not forbidden them to fight because it is a sin, but because such an exercise is not congruous with their person."<sup>2</sup>

In the earlier Middle Ages the evils of war were widely felt, for, in the absence of strong governments, fighting was going on much of the time between the feudal lords of the day. As a consequence, while the legitimacy of war was generally recognized by the authorities of the church, frequent efforts were made by them to limit its

<sup>1</sup> See Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, 2d ed., II, 45, 79, 88, 511, 705; IV, 115; V, 222. See also the *Decretum Gratiani*, xxiii, 8, 6 (p. 954), where it is said that clerics are not to fight, but may exhort others to do so (cf. *ibid.*, xxiii, 8, 19).

<sup>2</sup> *Summa*, II, ii, Qu. 4, Art. 2.

extent and mitigate its evils. The popes often employed their good offices to bring about peace, for instance by acting as mediators; and in the eleventh century, in a number of dioceses in France and later in Germany, peace leagues were formed which had considerable influence. The so-called "Peace of God" was also repeatedly proclaimed by bishops and councils, making it a mortal sin to attack monks, clerics, pilgrims, peasants, women, and other non-combatants and defenseless persons, or to profane churches and other sacred places by conflict and bloodshed.

Similarly in the so-called "Truce of God" the effort was made to limit war by reducing the number of days on which it was lawful to fight. At first the prohibition covered Saturday and Sunday. Later it was commonly made to include Thursday and Friday as well as certain feast days and the whole of Advent and Lent. The prohibition was not intended to interfere with the right of kings to make war at any time, but only to limit the constant strife which was going on between feudal lords and their retainers.<sup>1</sup> The efforts met with but a limited success, and only with the growth of the royal power in the thirteenth and following centuries were private wars finally put an end to.

Although in the ways indicated the church did something in the Middle Ages to limit the ravages of war, it also directly contributed to war by promoting the Crusades and by sanctioning the suppression of heretics. There was developed during this period, and supported by the church, the notion of a holy war against unbelievers—a notion practically identical with that of the Mohammedans. Thus in the *Decretum Gratiani* (causa 23, quest. 5, c. 46) it is said: "Whoever dies in battle waged against the infidels obtains the Kingdom of Heaven" (*Corpus*, p. 944).<sup>2</sup>

The idea had already been employed in connection with wars against the Saracens, for instance by Popes Leo IV and John VIII in the ninth century. The latter said: "We confidently reply that

<sup>1</sup> See the documents quoted by Robinson, *Readings in European History*, I, 187 ff., and by Henderson, *Select Documents of the Middle Ages*, pp. 208 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. causa 23, quest. 8, c. 9 (*Corpus*, p. 955), and also the utterances of Popes Urban II, Eugene III, and Innocent III, quoted by Thatcher and McNeal, *Source Book for Mediaeval History*, pp. 517, 528, 543.

those who out of love to the Christian religion shall die in battle fighting bravely against pagans or unbelievers shall receive eternal life.”<sup>1</sup>

A similar attitude was taken in the Middle Ages in connection with heretics. Into the history of the persecution of heretics it is impossible to enter here. It may simply be said that during the first three centuries it was usually believed among the Christians, as was quite natural in the circumstances, that religious opinion should be left entirely free and that no compulsion should be exercised in connection with it. The following words of Lactantius are representative:

For religion is to be defended, not by killing, but by dying, not by cruelty, but by patience, not by wickedness, but by faith. . . . For if you wish to defend religion by blood, by torments, by evil, it will not be defended, but polluted and violated. For nothing is so voluntary an affair as religion, in which, if the mind of the worshiper is averse to it, it is already destroyed and is no religion.<sup>2</sup>

But under the emperor Theodosius the Christian state began to proceed against heretics with some vigor, and heresy was even made a capital crime.<sup>3</sup> Augustine, after at first opposing the suppression of heresy by force, later advocated it because he saw how efficacious it had proved in his own town of Hippo.<sup>4</sup> But he urged the civil authorities not to inflict the death penalty, because the aim of all persecution must be, not simply to prevent the spread of heresy, but also to convert the heretic.<sup>5</sup> In the Middle Ages, however, not only were heretics frequently put to death, but the practice was justified by leading theologians on the same ground as war, that is, that evildoers might be punished and the state protected against them.<sup>6</sup>

The attitude of the Catholics toward war has been taken by most Protestants as well. In Luther's famous tract of 1526, *Ob Kriegsleute auch im seligen Stande sein können?*<sup>7</sup> he defended in

<sup>1</sup> Thatcher and McNeal, pp. 511 f.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Theodosian Code*, xvi, Tit. 5 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Divine Institutes*, v, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Epistle* 93, 17 (to Vincentius).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Epistle* 100 (to Donatus), 133 (to Marcellinus), and 139 (*ibid.*); on the other side Optatus, *De Schismate Donatistarum*, iii, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, II, ii, Qu. 11, Art. 3; and *Decretales Gregorii IX*, iv, Tit. 7 (*Corpus Juris Canonici*, Vol. II, pp. 778 f.).

<sup>7</sup> Erlangen edition of his works, XXII, 244–90.

his usual picturesque style the traditional position, urging both Scripture and common-sense in its support. The work was written in response to the query whether a Christian could give himself with a good conscience to the military profession. Luther answers the question in the affirmative, appealing to the passage in Luke so often quoted by the Fathers, and he defends also the custom of hiring one's self out as a soldier to foreign commanders, provided it does not interfere with one's duty to one's own country and is not based on mere greed. A just war undertaken for the punishment of evildoers, or for the preservation of peace, is to be approved on the same ground as a surgical operation, and we must look at it with the eyes of men, not with the eyes of children who see only the immediate evil. The prince is intrusted "with the sword, not with a fox's tail," and he is under obligation to use it against the wicked. War is put by Luther on the same footing as the punishment of criminals by the constituted authorities, and the one is justified as well as the other.<sup>1</sup> Wars are of three kinds: The first is a war waged by the people against their rulers. This Luther condemns unconditionally and in any and all circumstances. Subjects have no right to rebel against their rulers, however tyrannical they may be. The people need curbing, and it is better for their tyrants to do them wrong a hundred times than for them to do their tyrants wrong once. It is better for the people to suffer for their rulers than their rulers for them. On the other hand, war between independent princes or separate states is legitimate, provided it be undertaken for a just cause, that is, provided it be a defensive war. Offensive wars are to be unqualifiedly condemned. "We must discriminate," Luther says, "between a war begun voluntarily and gladly and a war into which one is driven by need and compulsion after being attacked by another. The former may be called a war of pleasure; the latter a war of necessity. The first belongs to the devil—may God not prosper it! The other is man's misfortune—God grant his help!"<sup>2</sup> A third kind of war is that undertaken by princes against their subjects, when the latter rise in rebellion or stir up sedition. This too is justified if it be carried on in the fear of God and with a righteous purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also his *Von weltlicher Oberkeit* of 1523.

<sup>2</sup> P. 273.

Taking up the question of the duty of subjects to their princes when commanded by the latter to fight, Luther declares that if they know beyond a peradventure that the war is unrighteous they should refuse to engage in it, but otherwise they should obey as in all other matters.

We are here, they should say, in the service of our prince and in fulfilment of our duty to him, for we are bound by God's will and order to support our lord with body and goods. Although in the sight of God we are miserable sinners as well as our enemies, nevertheless because we know, or, at any rate, have no knowledge to the contrary, that our prince is right in this affair, and are therefore sure and certain that we are serving God himself in such service and obedience, let every one of us be fresh and undismayed and realize that his fist is God's fist, his spear God's spear, and cry with heart and mouth "Hail to God and the Emperor! If God gives us the victory, the honor and glory shall be his, not ours."<sup>1</sup>

In his sermons on the First Book of Moses, published in 1527,<sup>2</sup> Luther defended the wars of extermination recounted in Genesis on the ground that they were commanded by God. Whatever God commands must be done, even if it violate our own sense of right. "If God demands of me that I beat my neighbor, I must do it."<sup>3</sup>

Many lofty people are offended at such accounts, when they consider them in the light of the reason. But the reason is blind and foolish and cannot do otherwise in dealing with God than suggest to him what is excellent and good; and one must do as it says. This God cannot suffer, and so he often prepares such a deed, and will have it done in order to blind the reason. Hence he says, believe me and have no regard for the nature of the deed, whatever it is, but when I command it, do it.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, he interpreted Christ's precept, "Resist not evil" in the following way:

But you say: Yes, but Christ has said in clear words, Resist not evil. That sounds plain, as if it were surely forbidden. Answer: Yes, but see with whom he is talking. He doesn't say evil is never to be resisted, for that would put an end to all rule and authority. But he says: You, you shall not do it. Who is this You? The disciples of Christ, whom he teaches how to live by themselves apart from civil government. For to be a Christian, as has been abundantly shown, is another thing than to have a worldly office or position. Therefore he intends to say: Let him that is in the civil government withstand the evildoer and judge and punish him as the jurists and laws teach. To you,

<sup>1</sup> P. 285.

<sup>2</sup> Erlangen ed., XXXIII, 286 f.

<sup>3</sup> P. 286.

<sup>4</sup> P. 288.

however, as my disciples, whom I teach not how to rule but how to live before God, I say, Resist not evil, but endure everything, and have a pure friendly heart toward those who do you wrong or violence.<sup>1</sup>

In his *Institutes*, Calvin took in general the same position that Luther took on the subject of war. And in his commentaries on the Gospels he interpreted the utterances of Christ which pointed in another direction in the traditional way as inculcating only the spirit of love and forgiveness and not an attitude of non-resistance, either for individuals or for states. The following sentences may be quoted from the final edition of the *Institutes*:

To hurt and to destroy are incompatible with the character of the godly, but to avenge the afflictions of the godly at the command of God is neither to destroy nor hurt.<sup>2</sup> . . . . If it be objected that in the New Testament there is no precept or example which teaches that war is lawful to Christians, I answer, first, that the reason for waging war which existed in ancient times is valid also today, and that, on the contrary, there is no reason which should prevent rulers from defending their subjects. Secondly, that no express declaration on this subject is to be expected in the writings of the apostles, whose design was not to organize a state but to establish the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Lastly, that it is there also implied that Christ by his coming made no change in this matter.<sup>3</sup>

There was evidently no difference of principle between the reformers and the Roman Catholic authorities: the spirit of the gospel, it was believed, has in no way affected the duties of officials and the relations of states, except to emphasize the importance of observing the natural laws of justice in all matters.

But though the official and prevailing opinion both in Catholicism and Protestantism has been as indicated, a very different view has found expression over and over again in the history of the church, the view, namely, that all war is un-Christian and opposed to the spirit of Christ. Augustine's discussions of the subject show that this view was abroad in his day, and in the Middle Ages there were many champions of it, including the Cathari, the Waldenses, and no less a figure than the statesman and theologian Wyclif, who was followed in the matter by many of the Lollards. In his *De officio regis*<sup>4</sup> (chap. xii), Wyclif discusses the matter in

<sup>1</sup> Erlangen ed., XLIII, 142.

<sup>3</sup> iv, 20, 12.

<sup>2</sup> iv, 20, 10.

<sup>4</sup> In *Wyclif's Latin Works* (1887), pp. 261 f.

considerable detail, and though he admits at the beginning that war may be just if waged for the love of God and one's neighbor, he yet shows that it is opposed to the law of nature, the law of Christ, and the law of human reason; and he takes up and dismisses as unsound one excuse after another commonly urged in justification of it. Love should control all our relations to our fellows, and vengeance should be left wholly to God. The teaching and example of Christ show that we ought to practice the principle of non-resistance even to the extent of yielding up our goods and our life as well. Since Christ came, the Old Testament has no authority. It is an argument of anti-Christ that force may properly be repelled by force. "We are advised to flee from one city to another, but to resist with violence seems not fitting to mature disciples of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in one of his Latin sermons,<sup>2</sup> although he recognizes that a war may be lawful if three conditions are fulfilled: "first, that the cause for which war is waged is just, secondly, that the person attacked has an unjust cause, and, thirdly, that the intention is right," nevertheless he maintains that we cannot war justly unless armed with spiritual weapons, and if we were thus armed, we should beat our swords into plowshares and refrain from fighting. It is not necessary to avenge injury even though the law fails to give us redress. "The counsel and doctrine of Scripture is, that through the patient endurance of injuries and through kindness, the world is conquered far more efficaciously than by weapons of war, so far as concerns the universal church and permanent peace. Those who fight, therefore, spurn the salutary counsel of Christ and follow the counsel of the world."<sup>3</sup>

In still another sermon<sup>4</sup> he shows that even the strongest reasons commonly urged for war—the maintenance of justice, the protection of the poor, the checking of wickedness—are inadequate, for we cannot be sure that we are promoting the right in fighting, and in any case we are doing evil that good may come.

<sup>1</sup> P. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon 24, in *Sermones*, Vol. IV.

<sup>3</sup> P. 211.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Sermon 4; cf. also the *Opera minora*, pp. 123 f.

In a tract on the seven deadly sins, probably by Wyclif, but possibly by an early Lollard, occurs the following striking passage:

Why should we not fight against our enemies? for else they would destroy us and damn their own souls. And thus for love we chastise them, as God's law teaches us. And so, since our enemies would assail us, but if we assailed them before, since we love better ourselves, we should first assail them and thus we shall have peace. Here methinks that the fiend deceives many men by falseness of his reasons, and by his false principles. For what man that has wit cannot see this falseness? If it be lawful by strength to withstand violence, then it is lawful to fight with men that withstand us. Well, I wot that angels withheld fiends, and many men by strength of law withhold their enemies; and yet they kill them not, nor fight not with them. And wise men of the world hold their strength, and thus vanquish their enemies without any stroke; and men of the gospel vanquish by patience, and come to rest and to peace by suffering of death. Right so may we do, if we keep charity; though men ravish our Lordship, or else our movables, we should suffer in patience, yea, though they did us more. These be the counsels of Christ. But here the world grudges, and says that by this wise were realms destroyed. But here belief teaches us, since Christ is our God, that thus should realms be established, and our enemies vanquished. But peradventure many men should lose their worldly riches. But what harm thereof? . . . . If he were thus patient his enemies would kill him. As if a man would say that if he kept Christ's counsel the enemy would foredo him, for he is more than Christ. And if we fight thus for love, it is not love of charity; for charity seeks not one's own good in this life, but common good in heaven by virtuous patience. And well I wot that worldly men will scorn this sentence; but men that would be martyrs for the love of God will hold with this sentence; and they be more to trust, for they have more the charity and better be with God. And deceit of love is with men that fight, as with fiends of hell is feigned false love. But at Doomsday shall men wot who fight thus for charity; for it seems no charity to ride against one's enemy well armed with a sharp spear, upon a strong courser; for even the kiss of Iscariot was more token of charity. And so God's law teaches men to come before in deeds of charity and works of worship; but I read not in God's law that Christian men should come before in fighting or battle, but in meek patience. And this were the means whereby we should have God's peace.<sup>x</sup>

After denouncing the Crusades and the Pope's part in them, he concludes: "But belief should teach us to be meek as Christ was, and then should we fare the better, both to body and soul.

<sup>x</sup> *Select English Works of Wyclif*, edited by Arnold, III, 137 f. I have modernized the spelling.

If we have ire in God's cause, keep we that with meekness and with prudence of God, and so shall we please him."<sup>1</sup>

In the sixteenth century many of the Anabaptists, Menno Simons and the Mennonites, Henry Nicholas and the Family of Love, and a man of so different a type as the humanist Erasmus, took a similar position, maintaining that war is necessarily opposed to Christianity and is in no circumstances justified.

Erasmus' discussion of the matter in his *Adagia*<sup>2</sup> is one of the most striking and eloquent arraignments of war ever published. "Nothing," he declares, "doth worse become a man (I will not say a Christian man) than war."<sup>3</sup> And again:

War is a thing that should be by all means and ways fled and eschewed.<sup>4</sup> But after Christ commanded the sword to be put up, it is unlawful for Christian men to make any other war but that which is the fairest war of all, with the most eager and fierce enemies of the church, with affection of money, with wrath, with ambition, with dread of death. These be our Philistines, these be our Nabuchodonosors, these be our Moabites and Ammonites, with the which it behooveth us to have no truce. With these we must continually fight, until (our enemies being utterly vanquished) we may be in quiet, for except we may overcome them, there is no man that may attain to any true peace, neither with himself, nor yet with no other. For this war alone is cause of true peace. He that overcometh in this battle, will make war with no man living.<sup>5</sup> . . . . Ye say ye make war for the safeguard of the commonweal, yea, but no way sooner nor more unthriftily may the commonweal perish than by war. For before ye enter into the field, ye have already hurt more your country then ye can do good getting the victory.<sup>6</sup>

Erasmus' discussion had the great merit, not shared by all the opponents of war, of distinguishing war from the use of force by the officials of the state in preserving order and putting down crime. The latter Erasmus defends, but the former he condemns unqualifiedly. Punishment for crime is visited only upon the guilty, but war brings suffering upon innocent and guilty alike. And with this in mind, Erasmus exclaims, in striking contrast with many an expounder of religion and law: "It is better to let a

<sup>1</sup> P. 142.

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the fourth *Chiliad*. I quote from the reprint of an old English translation published by J. W. MacKail, under the title *Erasmus against War* (1907).

<sup>3</sup> P. 4.

<sup>4</sup> P. 57.

<sup>5</sup> P. 45.

<sup>6</sup> P. 60.

wound alone that cannot be cured without grievous hurt and danger of all the whole body.”<sup>1</sup>

Erasmus’ attitude is all the more significant because there was no personal reason in his case for protesting against war, as there was in the case of most of the sects who denounced war, persecution, and capital punishment as all of a piece, and equally opposed to the spirit and precepts of Christ. That the protest should have come so largely from those oppressed by the authorities is not an accident. It was inevitable that they should question the lawfulness of using the sword when it was thus turned against themselves. That a man like Erasmus should contend eagerly for the same principle means much for his humanity and wisdom.

The attitude of George Fox and the Quakers in the next century is too well known to need presentation. But it may be worth while to quote a couple of sentences from Barclay’s elaborate discussion of the subject in his *Apology*, to show the difference between the underlying principles of the Friends and those of traditional Catholicism and Protestantism.

They object: That Defence is of natural Right, and that Religion destroys not nature. I answer, Be it so; but to obey God and commend ourselves to Him in Faith and Patience, is not to destroy nature, but to exalt and perfect it; to wit, to elevate it from the natural to the supernatural life by Christ living therein, and comforting it, that it may do all things, and be rendered more than conqueror. . . . But for such, whom Christ hath brought hither, it is not lawful to defend themselves by Arms, but they ought over all to trust to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

It is not necessary to carry this sketch farther. The modern peace movement, which dates from the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, has been adequately recounted by many writers. It is of interest to note that most of the proposals to which it has led, including arbitration, international peace congresses, international tribunals, and the like, were suggested long ago in such books as Emeric Crucé’s *Le Nouveau Cynée*, of 1523, and Grotius’ *De jure belli et pacis*, of 1625. But all such matters belong to the field of law, not of religion, and hence do not fall within the scope of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> P. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Proposition XV, § 15.